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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/16/2019
TAGS: [OIIP](#) [BBG](#) [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [KU](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: IRANIAN JAMMING OF IBB SERVICES INTENSIFIES

REF: A. KUWAIT 778 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 756

Classified By: Econcouns Oliver John for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: This cable provides additional information on Iranian jamming of USG International Broadcasting Bureau (IBB) transmissions (ref B). Recent months have seen a significant increase in Iranian efforts to jam satellite transmissions of Voice of America (VOA) Persian News Network (PNN) and other Farsi-language broadcasting. While the GoI's jamming efforts peaked during the aftermath of the June 12 elections in Iran, IBB officers believe that the regime continues to seek to disrupt USG and other efforts to provide the Iranian people with alternative news sources. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) In late August and early September, IBB officers report, one of the commercial satellites transmitting VOA Farsi-language broadcasting into Iran experienced technical problems that affected up to 10 of the satellite's transponders over several days. Arabsat, which owns the satellite in question, say that the technical problems -- which affected approximately 50 video channels including the VOA PNN service -- were likely the result of Iranian jamming. Arabsat asserts that, when the VOA PNN channel was removed from the transponder in question, the alleged jamming ceased. (Note: VOA PNN was removed from the Arabsat satellite for 10 days, from September 6 to September 15. IBB officers note that the new frequency from which VOA PNN is now being broadcast on Arabsat is equally, if not more, susceptible to GoI jamming. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (C) IBB officers point out that, if these problems do indeed constitute a jamming effort by the Iranian regime, it is a new approach for the GoI. Rather than attempting to jam the specific signals of VOA and other IBB video services, the regime may be putting pressure on the operators of the commercial satellites in question, i.e., by disrupting multiple broadcasters' programming, the GoI hopes that commercial considerations will force satellite operators to remove VOA and other Farsi-language programming. IBB officers emphasize that it is still too early to determine categorically if the GoI is behind these disruptions.

[1](#)4. (C) The apparent jamming of the Arabsat satellite may be part of a concerted campaign by the Iranian authorities to disrupt VOA PNN, BBC and other Farsi-language broadcasting into Iran. GoI "downlink" jamming of such services increased in mid-May and continues. In the aftermath of the June 12 elections in Iran, the GoI engaged in more invasive "uplink" jamming for the first time since 2003, according to IBB officers.

[1](#)5. (C) The GoI's jamming peaked in the aftermath of the June 12 elections, when the regime sought to minimize international coverage of the mass protests affecting Tehran

and other Iranian cities. The most significant uplink jamming attack took place on June 19 when the Iranians "spiked" IBB's MCPC (multiple channel per carrier) transmitter on the Eutelsat Hotbird 8 commercial satellite in an effort to disrupt VOA broadcasts. This attack disrupted all IBB services bundled on IBB's Hotbird satellite MCPC transmitter, affecting IBB broadcasting to several Middle Eastern and African countries. IBB engineers in Kuwait, Europe and the U.S. were eventually able to counter the disruptions by moving the VOA broadcast from the Hotbird MCPC bundle to another commercial satellite.

16. (C) Comment: Increased GoI jamming of VOA and other USG Farsi-language services in recent months -- including the apparent attempts to disrupt a large number of Arabsat broadcasts -- highlights the acute sensitivities associated with USG and other efforts to provide the Iranian people with alternative sources of news and other information. End Comment.

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